UNITED
NATIONS

E

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/1997/9
24 January 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Organizational session for 1997
4-7 February and 1-2 May 1997
Item 6 of the provisional agenda*

COMMITTEE ON NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

Provision of documentation to the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations

Note by the Secretariat

I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its 1996 session, the Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations recommended to the Economic and Social Council that the documentation of the Committee be issued in all six official languages of the Council, from within existing resources (see E/1996/102, sect. I, draft decision III).

2. Following informal consultations, on that draft decision, the Council, at its resumed substantive session of 1996, had before it a draft decision (E/1996/L.57) on the matter. In that draft decision the Secretariat was requested to prepare for the Council at its organizational session for 1997 an assessment of ways to implement the decision within existing resources. In its decision 1996/318 of 20 November 1996, the Council decided to postpone consideration of the draft decision contained in document E/1996/L.57 to its organizational session for 1997.

3. The present note provides background information on the question and the assessment mentioned in draft decision E/1996/L.57. It is submitted to the Council for its information.

* E/1997/2.

97-02119 (E) 280197

/...

II. COMMITTEE ON NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATIONS

4. The Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations was established by the Council in its resolution 3 (II) of 21 June 1946 (see E/1996/97) as a standing committee. The Committee carries out the functions assigned to it by the Council in pursuance of Article 71 of the Charter of the United Nations, which states that the Council "may make suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations which are concerned with matters within its competence". The original terms of reference of the Committee were set out in Council resolution 288 B (X) of 27 February 1950, which was superseded by Council resolution 1296 (XLIV) of 25 May 1968. The current terms of reference of the Committee are set out in Council resolution 1996/31 of 26 July 1996. In accordance with Council decision 1995/304 of 26 July 1995, the Committee meets on an annual basis.

5. The Committee was originally known as "the Committee on Arrangements for Consultation with Non-governmental Organizations (short title: Council NGO Committee)" (Council resolution 3 (II), sect. II, para. 1) and was composed of five members. It now has 19 members (Council resolution 1981/50 of 20 July 1981 and rule 80 of the rules of procedure of the Council (E/5715/Rev.2)). In Council resolution 1996/31, it is referred to as the "Council Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations".

III. DOCUMENTATION OF THE COMMITTEE

6. Since the inception of the Committee, its documentation has been provided in English, French and Spanish, which are defined in rule 32 of the rules of procedure of the Council as "the working languages of the Council".

7. The primary documents that are considered by the Committee at its annual session are the following:

(a) Annotated provisional agenda;

(b) Quadrennial reports submitted by non-governmental organizations in consultative status with the Council, categories I and II;

(c) Quadrennial reports: follow-up to decisions taken by the Committee at its previous session;

(d) Memoranda of the Secretary-General on deferred applications for consultative status;

(e) New applications for consultative status;

(f) New requests for reclassification of consultative status.

IV. BUDGETARY CONSIDERATIONS

8. The volume of pre-session documentation for the 1997 session of the Committee is conservatively estimated at 1,400 pages. It is on that basis that the statement of the Secretary-General on the programme budget implications of draft resolution E/1996/L.57 (E/1996/L.58) was prepared. In that statement the Secretary-General indicated that implementation of the draft decision, that is, provision of all documentation to the Committee in six official languages, "would entail additional conference servicing in 1997 estimated at full cost in the amount of $860,700".

9. Assuming that two full months would be available for the translation of the Committee's pre-session documentation, 1,400 pages would increase the workload of the Arabic, Chinese and Russian Translation Services of the Office of Conference and Support Services by approximately 25 per cent over their maximum capacity, which is estimated taking into account all available budgeted resources. It would be possible, however, to issue the in-session documentation of the 1997 session of the Committee in all official languages without additional budgetary resources.

10. The issuance of all pre-session documentation of the Committee in all official languages, however, is a matter of another magnitude and could not be undertaken by the Office of Conference and Support Services without additional resources under section 26E (Conference services) of the programme budget for the biennium 1996-1997, which was approved by the Assembly in its resolution 51/222 A of 18 December 1996. The same problem would, of course, arise in proposed programme budgets for future bienniums. A request by the Council for issuance of all documents for future sessions of the Committee in all official languages would entail significant budgetary requirements.

11. The problem is to find a means of reconciling, on the one hand, the expressed need of the Committee to have its documentation in all official languages and, on the other, the unavailability in the current biennium of sufficient resources to accomplish that. The Council is also reminded of the provision in the draft decision that its implementation should be within existing resources.

V. CONCLUSION

12. The Secretariat wishes to propose a restructuring of the documentation of the Committee in order to reduce it to a volume that could be issued in all official languages without recourse to additional financial resources.

13. Following the pattern used at the recent major United Nations conferences in the economic, social and related fields for the accreditation of non-governmental organizations, the Secretariat would prepare a summary of each new application for consultative status and of each new request for reclassification of consultative status, and would indicate its recommendation as to acceptance or rejection of the request. The complete submissions from non-governmental organizations would be made available as requested to the

Committee in the language of submission. A similar pattern would also be established for deferred applications for consultative status.

14. Reports on follow-up to the decisions taken by the Committee at its previous session, including those on quadrennial reports, would be issued as at present, but in all official languages.

15. The quadrennial reports of non-governmental organizations in consultative status, categories I and II, would need to be limited in some manner in order for them to appear in all languages. The Secretariat would suggest that consideration be given to a limit of two pages maximum for each non-governmental organization.

16. With these measures, it should be possible to keep the pre-session documentation of the Committee within a limit of 600 to 700 pages, which would allow translation into all six official languages.

UNITED NATIONS **E**

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/1997/10
4 February 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Organizational session for 1997
4-7 February 1997
Item 2 of the provisional agenda*

ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA AND OTHER ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS

Letter dated 16 December 1996 from the Chairman of the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to the President of the Economic and Social Council

The Economic and Social Council, in its resolution 1996/17, requested the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to act as preparatory body for the special session of the General Assembly to be held in 1998.

In my note on the organization of work for the fortieth session of the Commission, it is indicated that the duration of that session should be maintained at eight days divided into two parts: six days for the regular session, and two days for the Commission acting as preparatory body for the special session.

The understanding that the Commission would act as preparatory body for the special session within the eight days of the regular session was implied in paragraph 172 of the Commission's report by the wording: "planning for the next session should allow the Commission also to act, within existing resources, as the preparatory body for the special session of the General Assembly" (emphasis added). No formal decision, however, was forwarded by the Commission to the Council regarding the distribution of its work to act both as Commission and as preparatory body for the special session.

At its second ad hoc open-ended intersessional meeting, held on 11 December 1996, the Commission, inter alia, confirmed that this was its intention and decided that, as Chairman of the Commission, I should write to you in order to clarify any possible misunderstanding and to ensure that there will be no budgetary implications. I have also requested the Secretary of the

* E/1997/2.

Commission to prepare a draft decision to be presented to the Council at its organizational session in 1997 concerning the distribution of work of the fortieth session of the Commission. The text of the draft decision is annexed to the present letter.

(Signed) Helmut BURKE
Chairman of the Commission
on Narcotic Drugs at its
thirty-ninth session

Annex

DRAFT DECISION

At its _____ meeting, on _____ 1997, the Economic and Social Council, having considered resolution 1996/17 of 23 July 1996 in which it requests the Commission on Narcotic Drugs to act as preparatory body for the special session of the General Assembly, to be held in 1998, decided that the Commission, at its fortieth session, should devote two days of its eight-day session to act as preparatory body for the special session of the Assembly.

UNITED NATIONS **E**

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/1997/11
6 February 1997

ORIGINAL: ENGLISH

Organizational session for 1997
Agenda item 3

BASIC PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COUNCIL

Letter dated 5 February 1997 from the Permanent Representative of Japan to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with rule 12 of the rules of procedures of the Economic and Social Council, I have the honour to request the inclusion in the agenda of the 1997 substantive session of an additional item entitled "Proclamation of the year 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers".

The proposal for the proclamation of the year 2001 as the International Year of Volunteers was endorsed by participants in a policy forum convened in Tokyo jointly by the United Nations University and the United Nations Volunteers programme. Support was also expressed at a May 1996 conference on international volunteerism in Washington, D.C., that brought together 40 national organizations that collectively send more than 18,000 volunteers to serve abroad. At the 1996 annual session of the Executive Board of the United Nations Development Programme/United Nations Population Fund, the Executive Board acknowledged the importance of the contribution made by the volunteers worldwide and took note in that context, of the proposal of the United Nations Volunteers to consider having the International Year of Volunteers 2001 as one of the instruments to promote volunteerism.

The range of social and economic activities in which volunteers play an important role is enormous, but it is a role that usually goes unrecognized, precisely because it is unremunerated, spontaneous, often informal and unstructured. Many areas of activity, from the cultural and the political to group survival in times of crisis, would fail or shrink without volunteer input. The Government of Japan believes the proclamation of an international year by the General Assembly would mobilize recognition and expansion of local, national and international volunteer efforts worldwide.

My Government is prepared to submit the necessary documentation, with the cooperation of the United Nations Volunteers, within the relevant time limits

and will take steps to ensure the cooperation of interested organizations and Member States of the United Nations in this initiative.

I should be grateful if you would have this letter circulated as a document of the Economic and Social Council.

Hisashi OWADA
Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary
Permanent Representative to the United Nations

(Signed) Hiroyasu KOBAYASHI
Counsellor
Permanent Mission of Japan
to the United Nations,
on behalf of Ambassador Hisashi Owada

UNITED NATIONS **E**

Economic and Social Council

Distr.
GENERAL

E/1997/12
6 February 1997
ENGLISH
ORIGINAL: SPANISH

Organizational session for 1997
Agenda item 3

BASIC PROGRAMME OF WORK OF THE COUNCIL

Letter dated 6 February 1997 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Argentina to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

In accordance with rule 12, paragraph 1, of the rules of procedure of the Economic and Social Council, I have the honour to request the inclusion in the agenda of the substantive session of 1997 of an item entitled "The Year 2000: International Year of Thanksgiving".

This proposal enjoys the support of prestigious institutions in the United States of America and of various Member States which seek to celebrate cultural diversity.

In accordance with the provisions of rule 12 of the rules of procedure of the Council, a supporting statement setting forth the reasons of the Government of Argentina for making this request is annexed hereto.

(Signed) Ana María RAMÍREZ

97-03554 (E) 060297 060297

/...

Annex

SUPPORTING STATEMENT

The observance of a year of thanksgiving affords an opportunity to recall the fundamental importance which cultural diversity has for the development of harmonious and rich international relations.

In many of the world's countries the harvest is marked by important social and cultural events. The annual celebration of thanksgiving takes place on various dates and takes different forms. Up until now, it has not been observed by the international community as a whole. The observance of the year 2000 as the International Year of Thanksgiving will afford the international community an opportunity to do so.

The proposal is for an international observance in the year 2000, to be organized by the Centre for World Thanksgiving, and a series of national observances on various dates which are significant for each individual country, linked, in particular, with the annual harvest. In these observances, emphasis will be placed on the great importance of thanksgiving as an expression of gratitude in history, in philosophy, in the arts, in religion and in culture.

The observance of the year 2000 as the International Year of Thanksgiving within the United Nations will serve to harmonize the efforts of the different countries to achieve complete tolerance and to strengthen world peace.

This proposal will benefit international cooperation by promoting an awareness among peoples and Governments of the great importance of gratitude both in the personal life of individuals and in the life of communities, as well as in relations between countries and cultures.

The observance of the international year will generate complementary activities at the national and international levels through contacts with universities in different continents, interfaith services and academic and cultural events in various countries.

It will also mean beginning the twenty-first century and the new millennium with an International Year of Thanksgiving to celebrate the gift of life as the noblest expression of the human spirit.

The proposed item is in keeping with the principles and purposes of the Charter of the United Nations and will contribute to the progress of international cooperation, thereby fostering solutions to problems having a bearing on development.

The proposal is intended precisely to promote friendly relations among nations. This is an especially timely objective as the United Nations is embarking upon its second half-century.

Lastly, it should be emphasized that the proclamation of the International Year and the activities connected with it will have no financial implications for the United Nations or other international organizations.